

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend claims 1-3,5-6 and 9.

Please add claims 24-60.

1. (Currently amended) An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:
an input bin for receiving a stack of envelopes containing documents;
a cutter for cutting an edge of one of the envelopes;
an extractor configured to open the each envelope and present a document the
contents to an operator for manual removal; and
an imaging device for scanning the extracted documents to create a set of image
data.
2. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1, comprising:
a sensor for detecting whether the documents ~~are~~ was extracted from the an
envelope; and
a system controller to control the flow of envelopes, such that the envelope is
retained at a pre-determined location until the sensor indicates that the
documents ~~have~~ has been extracted.
3. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the extractor comprises
a pair of opposing arm configured to pull open the envelopes to present the
document contents to the operator.
4. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 comprising a non-volatile storage medium
for receiving and storing the image data.
5. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the imaging device
comprises an optical imaging device for obtaining optical image data
corresponding to the extracted documents.

6. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the imaging device comprises a magnetic imaging device for obtaining magnetic image data corresponding to the extracted documents.
7. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the imaging device comprises:
a optical imaging device for obtaining optical image data corresponding to select extracted documents;
a magnetic imaging device for obtaining magnetic image data corresponding to select extracted documents; and
a processor operable to analyze the image data obtained from the optical imaging device and the magnetic imaging device to verify the accuracy of the image data.
8. (Original) The apparatus of claim 1 comprising means for identifying the transaction-type for documents extracted from an envelope.
9. (Currently amended) The apparatus of claim 1 wherein the imaging device is positioned adjacent the extractor such that an operator positioned at the extractor can readily feed the extracted documents from the an envelope into the imaging device.
10. (Original) A method for processing envelopes containing transactional documents; comprising the steps of:
extracting a transaction from an envelope;
determining the transaction-type;
providing output relating to the transaction type;
scanning the extracted documents to create image data for the documents; and
correlating the image data with the transaction-type.

11. (Original) The method of claim 10 comprising storing the image data on a non-volatile storage medium.
12. (Original) The method of claim 10 comprising the step of retaining the envelope at a pre-defined position until the transaction has been extracted from the envelope.
13. (Original) The method of claim 12 comprising the step of determining whether the transaction is extracted from the envelope, and controlling advancement of the envelope in response to the determination of whether the transaction is extracted.
14. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain optical image data corresponding to the documents.
15. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic image data corresponding to the documents.
16. (Original) The method of claim 10 wherein the step of imaging comprises the steps of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic and optical image data, and the method comprises the step of analyzing the optical and magnetic image data to verify the accuracy of the image data.
17. (Original) A method for processing envelopes containing transactional documents, comprising the steps of:
feeding envelopes from an input bin into a transport path;
opening the envelopes along an edge;

extracting a transaction from an opened envelope;
retaining the envelopes at a pre-determined position during the step of
extracting;
transporting the transaction to an imaging station adjacent the pre-determined
position; and
scanning the extracted documents to create image data for the documents.

18. (Original) The method of claim 17 comprising the step of storing the image data on a non-volatile image medium.
19. (Original) The method of claim 17 comprising the step of determining whether the transaction is extracted from the envelope, and controlling advancement of the envelope in response to the determination of whether the transaction is extracted.
20. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain optical image data corresponding to the documents.
21. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic image data corresponding to the documents.
22. (Original) The method of claim 17 wherein the step of imaging comprises the steps of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic and optical image data, and the method comprises the step of analyzing the optical and magnetic image data to verify the accuracy of the image data.
23. (Original) The method of claim 18 wherein the step of opening the envelopes

comprises cutting the envelopes along at least an edge, and the method comprises the step of pulling apart a front face of the envelope from a back face of the envelope to present the transaction to an operator for extraction.

24. (New) The method of claim 18 comprising the step of pulling one face of the envelope away from a second face of the envelope while the envelope is retained at the pre-determined position.
25. (New) An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:
 - an input bin for receiving a stack of envelopes containing a document;
 - a transport operable to convey an envelope along an envelope path;
 - a cutter for cutting an edge of the envelopes;
 - an extractor positioned along the envelope path and configured to open each envelope while the envelope is stopped along the envelope path and present the contents to an operator for manual removal;
 - a sensor operable to detect removal of the document from the envelope;
 - a system controller operable to control the transport to stop the envelope along the envelope path at the extractor until the system controller receives a signal from the sensor indicative of the document being removed from the envelope; and
 - an imaging device for scanning the extracted documents to create a set of image data.
26. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the extractor comprises a pair of opposing arm configured to pull open the envelopes to present the contents to the operator.
27. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 comprising a non-volatile storage medium for receiving and storing the image data.

28. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the imaging device comprises an optical imaging device for obtaining optical image data corresponding to the extracted documents.
29. (New) The apparatus of claim 25 wherein the imaging device comprises a magnetic imaging device for obtaining magnetic image data corresponding to the extracted documents.
30. (New) An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:
 - an input bin for receiving a stack of envelopes containing document;
 - a cutter for cutting an edge of an envelope from the stack;
 - an extractor configured to move a face of the envelope away from the other face of the envelope to present the contents of the envelope to an operator for manual removal;
 - a transport for transporting the envelope along an envelope path.
 - a system controller operable to control the transport to stop the forward transport of the envelope so that the envelope is stationary at the extractor while the envelope face is moved away to present the contents for manual removal; and
 - an imaging device for scanning the extracted documents to create a set of image data.
31. (New) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the extractor comprises a pair of opposing arm configured to pull open the envelopes to present the contents to the operator.
32. (New) The apparatus of claim 30 comprising a non-volatile storage medium for receiving and storing the image data.

33. (New) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the imaging device comprises an optical imaging device for obtaining optical image data corresponding to the extracted documents.
34. (New) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the imaging device comprises a magnetic imaging device for obtaining magnetic image data corresponding to the extracted documents.
35. (New) The apparatus of claim 30 wherein the system controller is operable to control the transport to automatically advance the envelope away from the extractor after the contents are removed from the envelope.
36. (New) A method for processing envelopes containing transactional documents, comprising the steps of:
feeding an envelope from a stack of envelopes in an input bin into a transport path;
severing the envelope along an edge;
stopping the forward advancement of the envelope;
opening the envelope by moving one face of the envelope away from the other face of the envelope while the envelope is stopped;
extracting a document from the opened envelope while the envelope is stopped;
transporting the extracted document to an imaging station adjacent the pre-determined position; and
scanning the extracted documents to create image data for the documents.
37. (New) The method of claim 36 comprising the step of storing the image data on a non-volatile image medium.
38. (New) The method of claim 36 comprising the step of determining whether the

transaction is extracted from the envelope, and controlling advancement of the envelope in response to the determination of whether the transaction is extracted.

39. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain optical image data corresponding to the documents.
40. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic image data corresponding to the documents.
41. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the step of imaging comprises the steps of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic and optical image data, and the method comprises the step of analyzing the optical and magnetic image data to verify the accuracy of the image data.
44. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the step of transporting the document to an imaging station comprises feeding the document to an input nip that engages the document and conveys the document toward the imaging station.
45. (New) The method of claim 36 wherein the step of transporting the document toward an imaging station comprises dropping the document toward a second transport that conveys the document toward the imaging station.
46. (New) A method for processing envelopes containing transactional documents, comprising the steps of:
feeding an envelope from a stack of envelopes in an input bin;
severing the envelope along an edge;

manually removing a document from the envelope while the envelope is stopped;
dropping the removed document toward a transport that conveys the document
toward an imaging station; and
scanning the extracted documents at the imaging station to create image data
for the documents.

47. (New) The method of claim 46 comprising the step of storing the image data on a non-volatile image medium.
48. (New) The method of claim 46 comprising the step of determining whether the transaction is extracted from the envelope, and controlling advancement of the envelope in response to the determination of whether the transaction is extracted.
49. (New) The method of claim 46 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain optical image data corresponding to the documents.
50. (New) The method of claim 46 wherein the step of scanning comprises the step of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic image data corresponding to the documents.
51. (New) The method of claim 46 wherein the step of imaging comprises the steps of scanning the documents to obtain magnetic and optical image data, and the method comprises the step of analyzing the optical and magnetic image data to verify the accuracy of the image data.
52. (New) An apparatus for processing mail, comprising:
an input bin for receiving a stack of envelopes containing documents;

a cutter for cutting an edge of one of the envelopes the envelopes;
an extractor configured to open each envelope and present the contents to an operator for manual removal;
a transport configured to receive an extracted document that is dropped toward the transport and convey the document toward an imaging element; and
an imaging element operable to scan the extracted document to create a set of image data.

53. (New) The apparatus of claim 52, comprising:
a sensor for detecting whether the document is extracted from the envelope; and
a system controller to control the flow of envelopes, such that the envelope is retained at a pre-determined location until the sensor indicates that the document has been extracted.
54. (New) The apparatus of claim 52 wherein the extractor comprises a pair of opposing arm configured to pull open the envelopes to present the document to the operator.
55. (New) The apparatus of claim 52 comprising a non-volatile storage medium for receiving and storing the image data.
56. (New) The apparatus of claim 52 wherein the imaging device comprises an optical imaging device for obtaining optical image data corresponding to the scanned document.
- 57 (New) The apparatus of claim 52 wherein the imaging device comprises a magnetic imaging device for obtaining magnetic image data corresponding to the scanned document.

58. (New) The apparatus of claim 52 wherein the imaging device comprises:
an optical imaging device for obtaining optical image data corresponding to
select extracted documents;
a magnetic imaging device for obtaining magnetic image data corresponding to
select extracted documents; and
a processor operable to analyze the image data obtained from the optical
imaging device and the magnetic imaging device to verify the accuracy of
the image data.
59. (New) The apparatus of claim 52 comprising means for identifying the
transaction-type for documents extracted from an envelope.
60. (New) The apparatus of claim 52 wherein the imaging device is positioned
adjacent the extractor such that an operator positioned at the extractor can
readily feed extracted documents from an envelope into the imaging device.

REMARKS

In an Official Action dated April 21, 2004, the Examiner rejected the pending claims as obvious over U.S. Patent No. 5,460,273 in combination with U.S. Patent No. 5,147,169. Applicants request that the Examiner reconsider the rejection in light of the following discussion. Applicants further request that the Examiner favorably consider newly presented claims 24-60.

Stevens '273 is a patent directed to a fully automated high speed mail processing system. The system cuts open the mail, extracts the enclosed documents, and separates the documents. The system then scans each document for magnetic ink printing and optical marks so that the orientation of the documents can be determined, and then selectively re-orders and re-orient the documents as necessary so that all of